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# Sandra Alland

## Ambilingual

72 students  
at the Veena Vadini School  
in Madhya Pradesh  
can write simultaneously  
on two different subjects  
in two different languages  
using both hands

I'm neither as talented  
nor as holy  
but

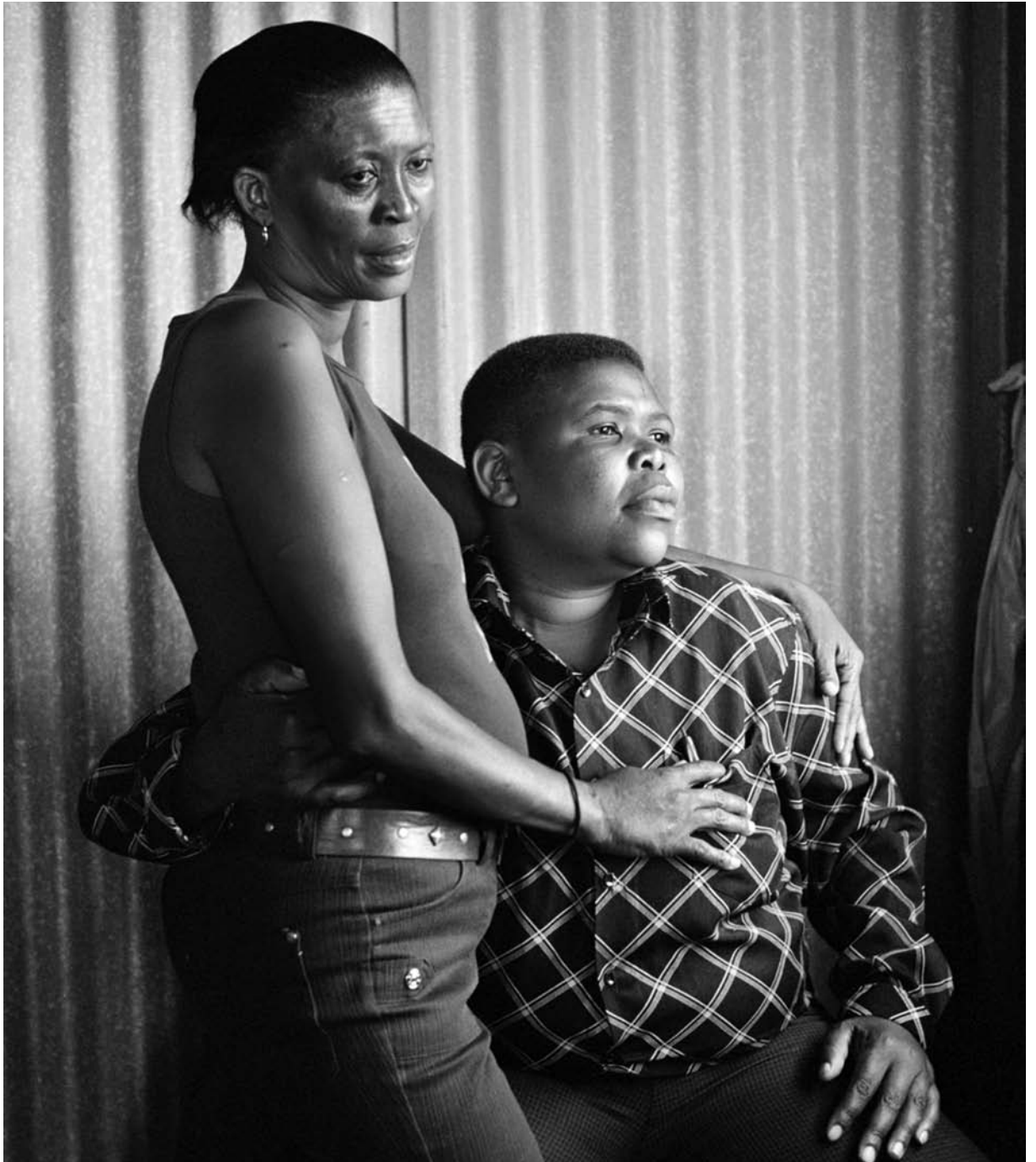
with my right hand  
I write this poem in English  
while my left  
caresses a thigh  
in the language of skin  
brings girl/boy/girl/girl/boy  
through gender to orgasm

the subject of this poem is simple,  
that of these bodies –  
divine

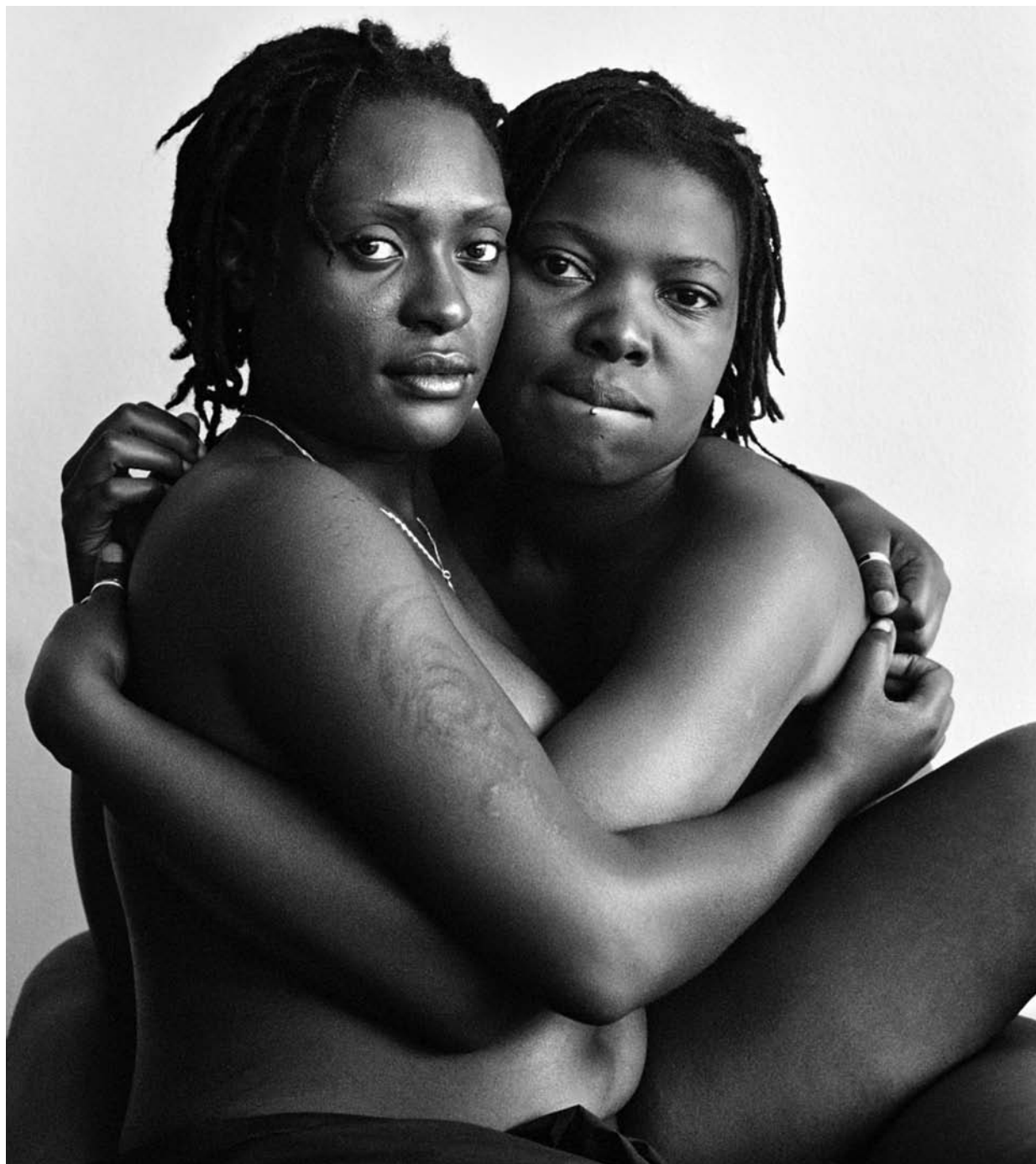
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The poet of this poem acknowledges that its subject is “simple” yet “divine.” Happily for the poem and us, the poet does not attempt to emulate the divine. Rather, we only are given a refreshing glimpse of it. Here, the poet clearly occupies the poet’s role: becomes the corpus callosum for simultaneous different realities. The geographic settings are wildly dissimilar yet the emotion of awe is consistent. The first and third stanza locate us in simultaneous parallel activities of difference – one rendered in a global media tone; the other in an intimate, erotic tone. The second and forth stanzas integrate these unrelated worlds as the poet steps back from these encounters – even from the poem, itself – and reflects on the poem’s meaning where reading and writing converge. This is one of those impactful “little” big poems. **Betsy Warland, Judge, Poetry Category, 2008.**



**Zanele Muholi**  
Julia and  
"Mandoza"  
Hokwana,  
Lakeside,  
Johannesburg  
2007



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**Zanele Muholi**  
Musa Ngubane  
and Mabongi  
Ndlovu, Hillbrow,  
Johannesburg  
2007

# Sophie Mayer

## *Zero/navel*

The first day in rehearsal, not the first hour but sometime  
towards late afternoon, when everything was edging almost  
gold, we stopped

and held each other's cocks. Bare as it sounds, it was: pants  
down warming overworked ankles, navels half-exposed against  
ragged T-shirt hems

whose limning insistently caught the eye. Mirror work, body exchanged  
for body against that gap of abdomen; cotton lifting from the core –  
pivots the drop. Fulcrum

and then: nothing. Not erotic but. Work. Dancing, we must touch  
each inch of the other. With confidence – and in, as well. It's  
a weighing-up,

a grip no different than lifting Sylvie at the waist, or a shovel. Spade's  
a spade, and we have things – memories, their movements – to dig  
out of one another

like fragments from a bombed city. We have to balance findings  
against what's lost. It's limbic. Circulating. Pulsing, even; turned  
out but not on, except

as lights are. Aware: body as story. On my knees: scars; his back  
knobbed with brittle bone. And these, between us, excavation  
and its tools,

evidence and wound. Breath catch and in. Evaluation. Paler, thinner,  
veined, warmer, silken. Shy. All movement focused in on navel, on  
notmoving. Holding

still.